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ABSTRACT

Issues of racial harmony in higher education are the subject of this address to participants at a college workshop on cultural diversity. Recently campuses across the country have seen an unparalleled explosion of racially-charged or motivated incidents sparking dialogue among students, staff, faculty and administrators. In addition, accrediting agencies have taken steps to encourage institutions to encourage student diversity. A dramatic conservative swing beginning shortly before the Reagan presidency has resulted in the erosion of safeguards to diversity. Citizens must learn to use the political system and personal action to improve campus climate and quality of life. Some racial perceptions are based on rumor which grow out of immediate emotional tension. Ethnic hostility is a projection of unacceptable inner striving onto a minority group. To achieve racial harmony with diversity society must go beyond implementing affirmative action and into managing diversity while avoiding stereotypes. Racial harmony presumes a respect for and appreciation of differences and individuality. Camden County College (New Jersey) faces the challenge of modifying its existing assumptions and model and helping people pioneer in creating a new vision of racial harmony on the campus. Included are 27 references. (JB)

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[RACIAL HARMONY]

Wanda E. Gill

9 AM Comments
CAMDEN COUNTY COLLEGE

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For me, in many ways, this is like a homecoming. I was born in Burlington and am one of the Waples. My father was a mortician in Salem and my aunt and cousin are morticians here in Camden. My uncle, Arthur Alvin Waples, lived and worked in Camden for most of his adult life. Pepsi Cola sponsors the Arthur Alvin Waples scholarship.

I wish to thank the administration of Camden County College for displaying vision and initiative in sponsoring today's program on cultural diversity, "Racial Harmony." As you know from reading periodicals like The Chronicle of Higher Education and Black Issues in Higher Education, campuses across the country have seen an unparalleled explosion of racially-charged or motivated incidents ranging from student demands for Ethnic Studies programs and multicultural book and resource inclusion in the curriculum to minority faculty and staff concerns with pay equity, "glass-ceiling" jobs, non-tenure track contractual hiring practices, professional and social isolation and an inordinate work load, frequently accompanied by an overload of committee assignments, minority student advisement/counseling and community liaison assignments that have little to do with professional development, tenure and promotion. Majority students sometimes feel they are in competition with minorities for financial aid, scholarships and admission, particularly at selective colleges and universities. They sometimes view special programs for minority student retention with suspicion, fearing inequity in classroom competition due to

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what they view as free tutoring, extra counseling and study skills assistance. Unfortunately, these students' views are sometimes shared by faculty and staff who believe the presence of minority students on the campus lowers standards, increases the probability of grade inflation and causes classroom turmoil by perceived displays of dissention and challenging behaviors. Faculty and staff sometimes view their minority peers as tokens, privileged to be on the campus because of affirmative action programs rather than academic merit or relevant job experiences. Many minorities, faculty, staff and students are viewed as unapproachable because of perceived attitude problems. In fact, racism is so acute that the Harvard Educational Review published a special edition in 1988, Fighting Racism in Education, to remind the educational community of its own inclination to sweep racial issues aside and to document the need for new dialogue on racism, given the campus reaction to the presence of diverse populations. A whole set of beliefs, values and attitudes, some reinforced by the media, can strain efforts at racial harmony.

Strain to racial harmony include:

- Media reports of lower test scores for African American and Hispanic students without explanations for the reasons behind these lower test scores.
- Media reports that paint adversarial relations between proponents and opponents of Ethnic Studies and a multicultural curriculum without ever providing a rationale on the politics of inclusion or exclusion.
- The much publicized African American and Hispanic conservatives like Shelby Steele of San Jose State

University, Linda Chavez, former chairperson of the Civil Rights Commission and Glenn Loury of Harvard University, who question affirmative action, quotas and bilingual education while benefitting, personally, from some such programs.

- Louisiana's David Dukes' candidacy and platform expressing his concern as to whether "...we'll ever have another White Miss America" and concerns for what he perceives to be the erosion of the rights of Whites.

Concerns for racial harmony on the campus have not only sparked dialogue among students, faculty, staff and administrators but regional accrediting agencies. The front page of the August 15, 1990 Chronicle of Higher Education says "2 of 6 regional accrediting agencies take steps to prod colleges on racial, ethnic diversity." The Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges has broadened the accrediting processes to evaluate institutions' efforts to recruit and retain minority professors and students. The Association's new standards encourage colleges to take a range of steps, from including multicultural courses in their curricula to creating more diverse faculties, governing boards and student populations. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges adopted similar standards. Howard Simmons of Middle States is quoted in The Chronicle of Higher Education as saying, "We cannot avoid public policy issues as part of the accreditation process because the public uses the results of that process." I applaud Middle States for assisting institutions in prioritizing diversity on the campus. Middle States' new standards, controversial though they are, will link accreditation to accessibility and equity

issues.

Please write down three descriptors you think most people think of when they think of African American students. Now write down three descriptors you think most people think of when they think of African American faculty. Now write down three descriptors for Hispanic students, Hispanic faculty, White students, and White faculty. I want you to carry those descriptors around throughout the day. At the end of the day, after all of the workshops, look at the lists and see if you can change those descriptors.

Higher education is not unlike American business in seeking out means to affirm diversity. R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., formerly an assistant professor at the Harvard Business School, currently executive director of the American Institute for Managing Diversity Inc. at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, has developed a career on promoting racial harmony.

Mr. Thomas highlights the following premises that were operative 30 years ago that formed the basis for affirmative action--

1. Adult White males comprise the business mainstream.

2. The economic edifice is solid and unchanging with space for everyone.

3. Women, Blacks, immigrants and other minorities should be allowed in as a matter of public policy and decency.

4. Widespread racial, ethnic and sexual prejudice keeps them out.

5. Legal and social coercion are necessary to bring about diversity in the work place.

Mr. Thomas believes these premises need revision since more

than half of the work force consists of minorities, immigrants and women. I believe some of these premises, applied to business, can be applied to higher education. Today certainly, nationwide, adult White males hold key administrative and professional tenured positions in the higher education mainstream. Women, Blacks, immigrants and minorities are still excluded due to biases and included due primarily to legal and social coercion and, to a lesser degree, to a sense of decency.

We, as a country, experienced a dramatic change in both philosophy and public policy beginning shortly before the Reagan presidency. A dramatic conservative swing has resulted in the erosion of safeguards to diversity. The Bakke and other cases raised questions of reverse discrimination due to affirmative action policies. Many of you have benefitted from perceptions of the progression from the conservative fifties to the challenging, confrontational 60's to the reactionary 70's back to the conservative 80's and 90's. As you witness cuts to student aid programs, calls for greater accountability of programs and funds, and most recently, the proposed dramatic federal cuts to medicaid, suggesting a mean spiritedness toward low income people of all categories, you must learn to use the political system to improve your campus climate and your quality of life.

You have seen the impact of single issues on elections. Here in New Jersey, the National Women's Political Caucus launched the "Empower America" program, designed to replace pro life male politicians with pro choice female politicians. Strategies used in New Jersey were to be implemented across the country, as feminists worked to literally change votes on issues of choice. Choice was

the issue that resulted in the election of African American Governor Douglas Wilder of Virginia. In Virginia, CHOICE proponents formed a coalition with African Americans to elect the candidate most responsive to their concerns. More political coalitions are necessary to achieve diversity on the campus.

Besides politics, economics is directly related to racial harmony. On most campuses, minority faculty are hired in renewable contractual rather than tenure-track positions. Some campuses use minorities as adjunct or part-time faculty. With no benefits and usually low pay, there is a high turnover rate. For those minorities who are employed in full-time permanent positions, the question is one of advancement. What are the possibilities for promotion? What are the possibilities for a job transfer? What staff development opportunities exist?

What role do you play, as an individual in achieving racial harmony? Do you welcome new people to the campus? Do you extend to new people the use of your copiers, your telephone, your office? Do you introduce new colleagues to others on the campus, trying to insure a smooth transition? Or are you indifferent? Or do you spread rumors, before new colleagues set foot on the campus?

Some racial perception is based on rumor. Rumor is defined by Gordon Allport in The Psychology of Rumor as "...a specific proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without secure standards of evidence being present."

"Rumor is set in motion and continues to travel in a homogeneous social medium by virtue of the strong interests of the individuals involved in the transmission. The powerful influence

of these interests requires the rumor to serve largely as a rationalizing agent: explaining, justifying, and providing meaning for the emotional interest at work at the time, the relationship between the interest and the rumor is so intimate that we may describe the rumor simply as a projection of an altogether subjective emotional condition."

Our perceptions of minority and majority groups can be influenced by rumors. Rumors may be motivated by sex, anxiety, hope and hate. By slapping the object of the rumor, the speaker both relieves the primary emotional urge and justifies the emotional feeling. In other words, rumors assuage immediate emotional tension by providing a verbal outlet that gives relief and reinforces the emotions.

Stern found that perceptions are affected by distortions and omissions. The observer tends to blot out details peripheral to the main theme. There is much that isn't seen at all. As time elapses, his report becomes less and less accurate, and the distortions more serious. Stern also found that perceptions were affected by differences among subjects in intelligence and in habits of perception. Retention and verbal report errors are serious enough, but emotional states greatly magnify their effects.

Bartlett, conducting studies in the Cambridge Psychological Laboratory, found that subjects would fill in the missing pieces of perceptions to get a better "gestalt" or whole. They also tended to exaggerate to magnify the perception. Do you fill in the missing pieces? Do you exaggerate what you've heard or observed? Rumors can support prejudice.

Allport, in The Nature of Prejudice, defines prejudice as

"...a pattern of hostility in interpersonal relations which is directed against an entire group, or against its individual members; it fulfills a specific irrational function for its bearer." He describes the functions of prejudice for "in" groups and "out" groups. He talks about the five (5) types of rejective behavior used by "in" groups against "out" groups -- (1) antilocution, (2) avoidance, (3) discrimination, (4) physical attacks, and (5) extermination. Unfortunately, in the past 10 years, different campus constituencies have reported verbal attacks, avoidance, discrimination and physical attack. Minorities, gays, lesbians and women have felt the debilitating power of name calling, the denial of equal treatment and the social facilitation of violence. Allport highlights the more positive stereotypes about Jews and the more negative stereotypes about African Americans.

- Jews are hard working and ambitious
- Jews have high intelligence
- Jews have a great love of, and respect for, learning
- Jews have marked family devotion
- Jews have sympathy with the oppressed
- Jews are moneyminded
- African Americans are passive
- African Americans clown
- African Americans steal, lie, and cheat

African American stereotypes reflect "id" impulses whereas Jewish stereotypes reflect "superego" impulses. Put another way, Bettelheim and Janowitz say ethnic hostility is "...a projection of unacceptable inner strivings onto a minority group." In Europe during WWII, where there was no African American minority. Germans called Jews lecherous, filthy and violent. Clearly, the numbers of the minority, the size and density of the minority group, have an impact on the nature of the stereotypes and the

level of rejective behaviors. Stereotypes have changed over time. The passive Negro of the 50's is the violent Black or African American of the 90's.

Bettleheim and Janowitz discovered that a person's present status in society is not as important as the shifting of his status upward or downward in regulating his prejudice. Campbell found that people dissatisfied with their jobs were far more anti-semitic than those who were contented.

Allport found that prejudice may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports.

To achieve racial harmony with diversity we must go beyond implementing affirmative action and into managing diversity while avoiding stereotypes.

1. We must clarify the motivation for diversity. Are we concerned with legal compliance? Are we interested in pacifying some outside group?
2. We must then clarify the vision of diversity. Do we see minorities clustered at the bottom of a relatively low plateau? Do we see "heightened/sensitivity?" Do we see co-existence and compromise where White males recognize minorities and women as equals and then bargain to negotiate differences?

"Racial harmony" presumes a respect for and appreciation of differences and individuality. Racial harmony means listening and responding to verbal and non-verbal messages with sensitivity.

According to The Chronicle of Higher Education's Almanac in the September 5, 1990 edition, among the states, New Jersey ranks ninth (9th) in education. 67.4% of adults have a 4 year high school diploma, 31.5% have from 1-3 years of college and 18.3% have 4-years of college.

Minority enrollment in public 2-year institutions is 21.8% and 23.4% in private, 2-year colleges. Minority enrollment at 2-year institutions is higher than the enrollment at both public and private 4-year colleges at 20.6% and 16.0%, respectively. In New Jersey, as in most other states, the number of minorities on community college campuses is growing.

Camden County College faces the challenge of modifying its existing assumptions and model, helping people pioneer in creating a new vision of racial harmony on the campus. As we proceed with today's workshops, let's honestly examine our feelings, perceptions and beliefs about racial harmony. Collectively, you can make Camden County College a model for the nation.

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